



The President's Daily Brief

7 February 1972



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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

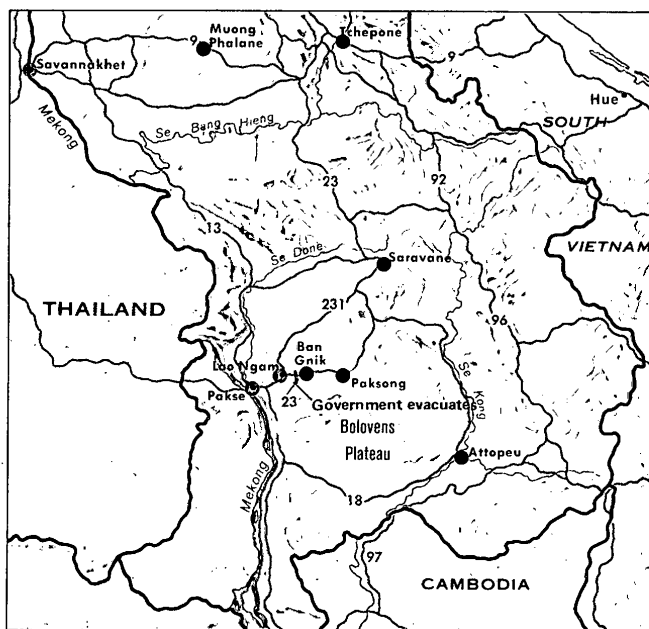
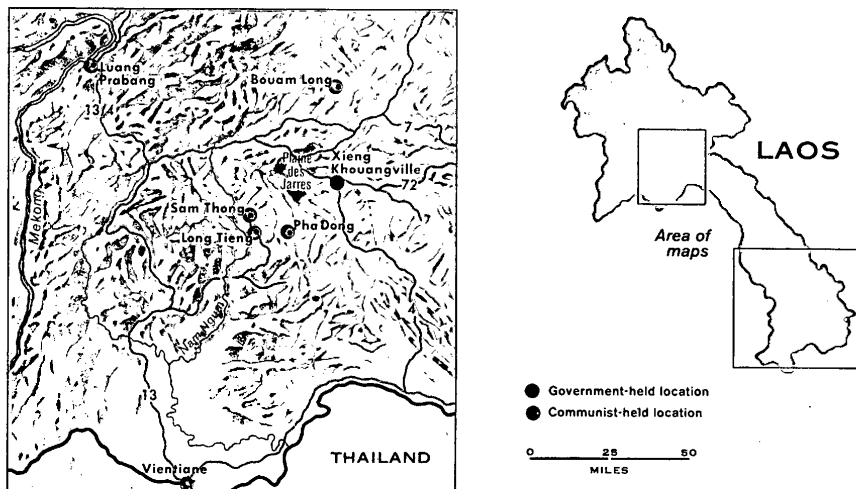
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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Lao Army has abandoned forward positions on Route 23 on the western approach to the Bolovens Plateau. East of Long Tieng, General Vang Pao has assembled a force of over 5,000 men and some have started moving northeast toward Route 4.
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A shipment of Czechoslovak arms has arrived on Cyprus, stirring sharp protests from Athens and Ankara. (Page 2)

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LAOS

Significant military action over the weekend was confined to the south where government units continue to be pushed back from the western approaches to the Bolovens Plateau. On 4 February, two Lao Army battalions abandoned their forward positions on Route 23, about two miles west of Ban Gnik. The battalion commanders reported receiving heavy weapons fire and being surrounded before leaving their posts.

The loss of these positions narrows the distance between Communist-held territory and the key river town of Pakse to 15 miles. We still doubt, however, that the enemy has serious designs on Pakse. The Communists appear to be widening their margin of protection for the Bolovens and most likely will continue to do so. Their current objective may be the road junction of Routes 23 and 231, about three to four miles farther west.

South of the Plaine des Jarres enemy action was limited to brief clashes and artillery fire on government troops. The Communists' shelling was heaviest in the Sam Thong sector.

General Vang Pao is continuing to assemble a substantial guerrilla force at Pha Dong, 12 miles east of Long Tieng. The airlift of at least 3,600 irregulars to the base over the past few days raises the total government strength there to more than 5,000 men. On Saturday approximately 1,000 of these troops began to move northeast toward Route 4. No significant contact with the enemy has been reported thus far.

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CYPRUS

A shipment of arms and ammunition arrived from Czechoslovakia in late January.

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President Makarios apparently plans to use most of the weapons to form a 2,000-man force personally loyal to him in order to counter what he views as a threat from General Grivas' supporters.

Press accounts of the shipment have stirred sharp protests from Athens and Ankara. Because of the origin of the arms, Athens suspects that they will be given to the Communists on the island rather than to the Greek-controlled National Guard. Turkish Foreign Minister Bayulken told Ambassador Handley that because the new Czech shipment might eventually be used against Turkish Cypriots, Ankara in turn might consider sending arms to the Turkish minority.

Adverse reaction to the arms shipment could disrupt recent progress toward resuming intercommunal talks. Even while expressing his dismay over the arms shipment, however, Bayulken told Ambassador Handley that he hoped the talks could begin by the end of February.

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